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Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization

Report of the Secretary-General

Background

1. By its resolution 48/2 of 13 October 1993, the General Assembly granted observer status to the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO).

2. ECO participated in the fiftieth anniversary commemorative session of the General Assembly, in 1995.

3. In its resolution 50/1 of 12 October 1995, the General Assembly affirmed the need to strengthen cooperation between entities of the United Nations system and ECO in the areas of economic and social development. In the same resolution, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly at its fifty-first session a report on the implementation of the resolution and decided to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-first session the item entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization". Accordingly, the Secretary-General submitted a progress report to the Assembly at its fifty-first session (A/51/265 and Add.1).

4. In its resolution 51/21 of 27 November 1996, the General Assembly urged the specialized agencies and other organizations and programmes of the United Nations system to initiate, maintain and increase consultation and programmes with ECO and its associated institutions in the attainment of their objectives. It called upon the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), as the regional arm of the United Nations having all States members of ECO as its members, to assume a specific role in promoting cooperation with ECO. It requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly at its fifty-second session a report on the implementation of the resolution and decided to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-second session the item entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization".

5. In pursuance of the above, a brief summary of the present status of cooperative relationships between ECO and various organizations of the United Nations system is given below.

United Nations Development Programme

6. ECO and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) signed a memorandum of understanding at Islamabad on 13 March 1995. Since the signing of the memorandum, many joint activities have been undertaken. UNDP provided the services of a consultant to ECO to carry out a study on the reorganizational aspects of the ECO secretariat. The study was used by the eminent persons group as reference material on enhancing the effectiveness of ECO. A UNDP consultant is currently carrying out a study on the complementarities of the economies of member States. In

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order to collect requisite information/data for the said study, the UNDP consultant visited the ECO secretariat and its member States. Based on the information/material collected, the consultant has drawn up a comprehensive draft. An initial review of the draft brought to the fore the need for some additions and modifications in the contents of the study. When completed, the study will serve as a valuable resource material for future studies, programmes, plans and projects.

7. UNDP is also undertaking efforts together with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) to enable ECO to benefit from the Advanced Cargo Information System (ACIS) and the Automated System for Customs Data and Management (ASYCUDA) within the general framework of the project prepared by ESCAP on international transport development in the ECO region.

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

8. ECO and ESCAP signed a memorandum of understanding on cooperation at Istanbul on 7 July 1993. Several joint activities have been organized by ECO and ESCAP since then. During 1993, ESCAP actively participated in the preparation of an outline plan for the development of the transport sector in the ECO region. A joint seminar was held at Tehran on the accession of States members of ECO to the international conventions on road and rail transport. ECO and ESCAP are presently working on the possibility of holding a round-table conference on the mining industry and minerals. Efforts are under way to identify a source of funding for this activity. A transit treaty framework for the ECO region is being worked out in collaboration with UNCTAD. A study on the investment and trade opportunities between the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and ECO regions is being worked out by ESCAP in close contact with ASEAN and ECO.

9. ESCAP also coordinated two meetings of the heads of subregional organizations at Bangkok and Jakarta in February 1994 and January 1995, respectively. The third consultative meeting of the heads of the subregional organizations was held at Tehran on 18 and 19 May 1997, jointly hosted by ECO and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran. A number of useful and constructive suggestions/proposals emanated as the outcome of the discussions focused on the priority areas of trade and investment, transport and communications, human resources development and poverty alleviation.

10. ECO attaches high priority to transport and communications. In this sector, ESCAP, UNCTAD and Islamic Development Bank are currently finalizing a comprehensive joint project on international transport development in the ECO region.

11. Another development that took place in this regard was the holding of an extraordinary summit meeting of the Heads of State and Government of the States members of ECO at Ashgabat on 13 and 14 May 1997. The highlight of the meeting was the adoption of the Ashgabat Declaration reiterating the importance of transport, communication and gas and the oil pipeline network for the region and determining priorities of projects, plans and programmes.

United Nations Children's Fund

12. Since the signing of the memorandum of understanding on cooperation between ECO and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) on 25 July 1994, joint workshops have been held on: (a) iodine deficiency disorder, at Ashgabat in June 1994; (b) breastfeeding and oral rehydration therapy, at Ankara in 1994; and (c) immunization, at Ashgabat in January 1995. To work out a future programme of action, consultations are in progress with UNICEF.

United Nations Population Fund

13. A memorandum of understanding was signed between ECO and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in New York in October 1994. Since then, ECO and UNFPA have jointly organized three events, namely: a conference on women's status and health, at Tehran in August 1995; a conference on reproductive health, at Islamabad in April 1996; and a conference on the implementation of Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, at Almaty in April 1996. UNFPA and ECO were planning to hold a conference on male involvement in reproductive health and family planning at Baku, Azerbaijan, in mid-1997.

United Nations International Drug Control Programme

14. ECO signed a memorandum of understanding on cooperation with the United Nations Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) at Islamabad on 15 March 1995 on the occasion of the third ECO summit meeting. Within the framework of the memorandum, UNDCP prepared a project proposal covering proposed technical assistance to implement the ECO Plan on Drug Control. Consultations are under way to finalize the project.

Specialized agencies

15. ECO also signed memorandums of understanding on cooperation with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in 1994 and 1995, respectively. A draft memorandum of understanding has been forwarded to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to formalize a cooperative relationship between ECO and FAO.